

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM D. BREWER

Interviewed by: Malcolm Thompson Initial Interview date: August 2, 1988

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This is an interview with Ambassador William Brewer on August 2nd, 1988 at his home in Falmouth, Massachusetts. The interview is part of the oral history project of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. The interviewer is Malcolm Thompson, a retired Foreign Service Officer.

[Note: Some portions of the interview are out of sequence with the tapes as Ambassador Brewer rearranged the transcript slightly in the editing for clarity.]

Q: To start with Bill, would you tell us when and why you decided on a career in the Foreign Service?

BREWER: Yes, Malcolm, I'd be glad to because I decided definitively at a very early age. I couldn't have been more than nine or ten when I got the idea that government service in the State Department and the Foreign Service would be something that I'd find fascinating. As people- you know grown-ups-asked me, "What are you going to do when you grow up?" I would say, "Well, I want to be in the Foreign Service," and uniformly they, of course, would say, "Oh, that's a fine ambition." So I was a confirmed addict of a Foreign Service career before I got to high school.

Q: Did you intend from the start to specialize in the Near East and the Arab world?

BREWER: Well, that came a little later but I still remember. I was in graduate school, at Fletcher, and a friend of mine and I were in my room and we were discussing what we would do in the eventuality that we might pass the Foreign Service exam. And we decided that area expertise was probably to be sought after, and I concluded at that time that the Near East, where I understood there were tremendous reserves of petroleum, would be an area that would be increasingly important to the United States and therefore I said to this friend of mine at graduate school, "I think if I get into the Foreign Service, I will specialize in the Near East."

Q: Very good. I would like to concentrate on your more senior assignments without overlooking any of your earlier posts. Is there anything of special interest you would like to comment on involving these earlier years? For example, when we served together in Damascus, in the early 1950s?

BREWER: Well, yes, there is, Malcolm, but if I could I would like to go back before we met in Damascus to my second assignment which was in Saudi Arabia because, although I was technically a very junior officer, I was in fact at the post what would now be called Acting DCM for six months, and actually was in charge of the Embassy in Saudi Arabia for a brief period-a week or ten days-when I was a Third Secretary. So I had some experience even at that stage which I think is of interest in connection with your project.

And in particular two things occurred which I think are useful to comment on: the first is that I was in Jeddah and keeping close track of the negotiations between ARAMCO and the Saudi Arabian government which led up to the conclusion in December 1950 of the first 50-50 profit sharing agreement between an oil company and a Near Eastern government. Prior to that time there had been agreements under which royalty had been paid and this system was not producing revenue which the Saudi government wished, and ARAMCO had secured a ruling from, I guess, the Attorney General, the Department of Treasury, anyway Washington, that the tax deducted by Saudi Arabia as part of this 50-50 split could be counted as a business expense in figuring their American income tax. So on that basis there were very complex negotiations which- I don't need to go into in detail-but which produced this 50-50 formula under which the profits were shared equally between Saudi Arabia and ARAMCO.

Q: What was your role in all this?

BREWER: My role was in following the negotiations and in reporting them to Washington because that was the first news that Washington had that the agreement had been concluded. But parallel to that we at the Embassy were considering how the Saudi government, could modernize its very antiquated fiscal arrangements. In fact I often thought it was like being in the Middle Ages. If you wanted to go down to send a cable, for example, you had to carry a large sack of silver rials because the only currency in the country was this full-bodied rial and it was very difficult to conduct large transactions with these vast amounts of small heavy coins. And we thought Saudi Arabia very badly needed a modern financial structure and in particular a central bank. And also, in due course, paper currency.

My role was to encourage and support the visits to Saudi Arabia by our Treasury representatives from Cairo over a period of months. These Treasury representatives made a number of preliminary suggestions and as a result of all this activity we finally decided that the thing to do was to encourage the Saudi government to request our assistance in providing some technical expertise which would assist them in setting up a central bank. And this was done and the Saudis agreed that they were going to need some assistance, and we cabled Washington, and they agreed, and they went out and they found a man who had been financial adviser, I believe, to Chiang Kai-shek, and had been an official in the State Department at one stage of the game, Arthur Young, a very able man, to advise the Saudis on setting up a central bank.

He came out to Saudi Arabia, and I met him at the airfield, and briefed him and we got him started and in due course he did propose what came to be known-they avoided the term "bank" because, you know, the shari'a (Islamic Law) does not sanction the payment of interest and the Saudis do not like the use of the term "bank", but essentially it's a central bank-he proposed the arrangements which resulted in the founding of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency. And that is the basis of the modern Saudi financial system which, of course, is now one of the strongest in the world.

Q: Very interesting. That was in 1950 and '51. After that I believe you were assigned to Damascus as a Political Officer?

BREWER: That's right.

Q: Do you care to comment on that assignment?

BREWER: Well, yes, I thought that was extremely interesting for my development as an Arabic language and area officer because at that time-I don't know whether it's still true-the Arab world as a whole could be likened to a tube of toothpaste and Syria was the paste that always came out the end of the tube no matter where you put the pressure. It was the cockpit, and also the prize, of Arab politics. The two chief competitors were Cairo and Baghdad but somewhere in the middle, although leaning more toward Cairo in the period you and I were there, was Saudi Arabia, particularly with financial support. In fact I remember when still in Saudi Arabia, the Saudis extending a \$6 million loan which I think turned out to be a gift to a Syrian dictator, Adib Shishakli shortly after his coup d'etat which established him in power. So the opportunity to head the Political Section in Damascus during this period gave me an unrivaled opportunity to learn about the intricacies of inter-Arab politics, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world because it was fascinating.

(Footnote Added:

This was also the period which witnessed the earliest tentative Soviet moves into the Near East, including Syria. The dynamics of this were made plain to me from the Jisr Banat Yacub ("Daughters of Jacob Bridge") diversion dispute in September-October, 1953. The Israelis had begun earth-moving operations near the bridge to divert the flow of the Jordan River, in an area which lay clearly in the Syro-Israeli Demilitarized Zone (DZ) from which Syrian troops had withdrawn after the armistice agreement between the two countries. The Syrian position, which seemed to us clearly supported by the language of the armistice agreement, was that no actions could be taken in the DZ without the concurrence of both sides. Damascus accordingly sought redress via a Security Council resolution condemning Israel. In the initial maneuvering over language, the USG supported the Syrians. A seven-point condemnation of Israel was drafted. However, at the last minute an eighth point was added to the effect that neither side could indefinitely block "development" in the DZ. This was defended by our UN delegation as "sounding a positive note". Of course, Embassy Damascus objected that this in effect undercut the entire resolution. For our pains we were simply cut out of the final exchanges of telegrams with the Department. The next text was put to a vote-and was promptly vetoed by the USSR.

This Soviet action represented Moscow's first overt move to improve its position with the Syrians and led to close Syro-Soviet collaboration by 1957. I have always felt that we did ourselves no service by thus offering the Russians an opening to move into the Near East.)

Q: Very good. Your next assignment apparently was in Kuwait?

BREWER: Well, yes, but maybe before we move on to Kuwait there's one other thing that I ought to mention in respect to the assignment in Damascus. And that is that, while we sought to develop good relations with the Syrians, we had great difficulty even at that time because of the creation of the State of Israel and our support for its creation. And you will recall that it was in 1954, I think, or 1955, that the efforts that culminated in the Baghdad Pact began to be made, the first being the Turko-Iraqi Pact which I think was in early 1955. And the question came up about the adherence to this agreement of other Arab countries. My recollection is that the Department encouraged all of us in the Arab world to try and see if we couldn't encourage adherence in the interest of building an effective barrier against the Communist expansion in that part of the world. However, the closer we came to soliciting Syrian adherence, and indicating to the Syrians that maybe there might be something in it for the Syrians, the more the Department seemed to draw back from any involvement of Syria in the Baghdad Pact. And, of course, as you know Syria never joined the Baghdad Pact. The government at the time later fell and was replaced by an anti-western government, and it has always been my speculation, but nothing that one can prove, that our failure to move forward at that time, which I think we did primarily because we were scared that the Syrians were going to want arms from us, and we were not going to provide them because of the proximity of Syria to Israel, that this contributed to Syria's turn to the Soviet Union and its acceptance of Soviet arms in the ensuing period after you and I had left Damascus.

Q: Do you believe that it could have been otherwise perhaps if our policy had been different?

BREWER: Well, I think it could have been because we after all did at a later stage provide substantial arms to Jordan and those arms have not been used against Israel. Had We provided similar arms to the Syrian government, we would have had more influence with Damascus than we in fact had, while the arms would not in fact have posed a significant threat to Israel but, to the contrary, would have reassured the Syrians-who, of course, were concerned that Israel might attack them. From a Syrian standpoint this was a question and concern to them, and it might have facilitated an earlier settlement of this very knotty problem.

Q: In other words, it was probably more of a domestic political decision that governed our policy in this respect. Shall we say the influence of the Jewish lobby on the Congress?

BREWER: Well, I'm not sure that it was that calculable at that time, but I think those considerations probably were not absent from the minds of top policy-makers in Washington. I do not recall that there was any outcry in the Congress or anything at that time. This was after all in 1955 and still pretty early in the game.

Q: Okay. Shall we move on to Kuwait? I believe your next assignment was in Kuwait?

BREWER: Yes, that's right. I was the Principal Officer there from 1955 to 1957 and that was a particularly interesting time because right in the middle of that was the Suez crisis which had the effect of closing the Suez Canal and immediately choking off temporarily the flow of oil from Kuwait, which was at that time providing a very substantial part of the oil that moved through the Canal. We had to watch the situation particularly closely because there were those in Kuwait who were very sympathetic with Nasser and the Egyptians and who were seeking to interfere with the flow of oil on land to the loading pier. I'll never forget that at one stage all of a sudden there was this loud explosion apparently and a pipeline was blown up which, however, turned out to be the wrong line. It was not an oil pipeline but it was the line carrying gas from one of the gathering centers to the water desalination plant in Kuwait town. That meant there was a shortage of fresh water until they got the pipe repaired but no interference with the outflow of oil.

Q: Is there anything else of significance that you'd like to comment on during your Kuwait assignment?

BREWER: Well, I think we had very good relations with the Kuwaitis despite the difficulties at the time of Suez because number one: it was a small post and we were in close touch with the people, it was not an elaborate diplomatic post. There were only two representatives there, the British political agent, and myself. And we dealt on a relatively close basis with the leaders of the Kuwait government and this was not only valuable experience, but I think it was useful in explaining the United States' point of view on these issues to the top level of the Kuwait administration at a time when they were still relatively accessible before they became independent and established a modern government as, of course, they now have.

Another consideration which helped very much was the fact that, since we had stood up in effect to the British at the time of Suez and forced them to evacuate with the French from Suez, our standing in Kuwait relative to that of the British, was high and we did not have the same kind of criticism as I'm sure we fell under subsequently in the Arab- Israel war of 1967.

Q: Very good. In 1957 you were reassigned to the Department as officer in charge of the Arabian Peninsula affairs.

BREWER: I was Country Officer for the Arabian Peninsula. There was an officer-in-charge of the Arabian Peninsula-Iraq affairs at that time but I only worked in that job for a year before I was fortunately promoted and took over as the officer-in-charge of UAR that involved Egyptian-Sudanese affairs. I did this just at the time of the landing of the US marines in Lebanon in the summer of 1958. I might say in passing because it is kind of interesting, I happened to be the first officer in the Department who was called about the coup d'etat in Baghdad and the assassination of young King Faisal and the former regent of Iraq. The Watch Officer-they had an antiquated arrangement in those days, not a proper secretariat as they have now- they had just a couple of Watch Officers who got in touch by phone with Desk Officers at their homes. He had called the Iraqi Desk Officer but had gotten no answer and he therefore called me, since he had had some dealings with me before and knew that I was in the same Office of Near Eastern Affairs. The reason he hadn't gotten the Iraqi desk officer was that he'd gone on vacation. So I immediately called my office director, and he called the Acting Assistant Secretary and we all converged on the Department about 7:00 in the morning of that Monday-I think it was the 14th of July (1958)-and we worked there all day. And it was during that day that the request came in from President Chamoun of Lebanon for assistance because he felt threatened by what he interpreted as an area-wide rising up of leftist elements incited by President Nasser. Since Lebanon had signed on to the Eisenhower Declaration, why we felt that we had to comply and accordingly Marines were landed early Tuesday morning, Washington time.

I had the duty in the Department that night for the NEA Bureau and I will never forget trying to get a few hours sleep on the Assistant Secretary's couch and being awakened every hour on the hour by a colonel calling from the Joint Staff in the Pentagon to report that it was now H- minus 4 hours and counting. I tried to discourage this officer from calling the next hour but he said, "that was SOP in the Pentagon," and this was the way he did it.

So, in any case, the landings took place and we soon had a new government in Lebanon which was what should have happened without the landings, in my judgement. While I think most of us in the Office of Near Eastern Affairs were opposed to the idea of the landings at the time they took place, as we felt this was a return to gunboat diplomacy which had been practiced by the British in the 19th century, on looking back on it, however, I became convinced that in fact the way the landings were carried out did create an opportunity for us in the Near East and led to a period of calm which lasted almost a decade. And my reasoning is this: that the Arabs, who are very alert to the roles and positions of the great powers, saw that one great power, namely the United States, was able to insert troops into the Near East without anything more than verbal objections from the Russians. And not only were we able to do that, but we did not use the presence of our troops to change the situation in Lebanon to our benefit. In fact, we permitted an election to take place which resulted in the elevation to the presidency of the former Chief of Staff, General Chehab, and we then left. We did not support President Chamoun's efforts to get himself reelected. And for both those reasons I think the Arab world became less anti-US in that the United States was prepared to act when it felt its interests were threatened in that part of the world, and that at that time the Russians were not able to do anything significant about it. I think that's very helpful.

Q: That's interesting. It brings to mind a question. When President Eisenhower sent in the Marines in 1958, as you have just recalled for us, it seems to have worked out fairly well, and yet here in recent times-was it 1985 or '86-President Reagan sent the Marines into Beirut under different circumstances and I think everyone will agree it was a disaster. Would you care to comment on the differences, why one policy worked out and the other didn't?

BREWER: I think I've indicated why I think the first one worked. Under completely different circumstances, we sent in the Marines several years ago, as I understand it, largely to provide some assurances to Israel that the situation would remain as it was while the PLO forces were being withdrawn from Beirut. We didn't want Israel to go in and engage in fighting the PLO forces in the streets of Beirut as this would have probably resulted in six months of terrible bloodshed and destruction. And the Marines were provided as part of the deal under which the withdrawal of the PLO units took place. But unfortunately once the Marines were withdrawn, the right-wing and to some extent maybe pro-Israel elements in the Lebanese Christian community proceeded to attack the refugee camps in which were still living dependents of a lot of these PLO troops who had been withdrawn. We therefore felt we had to send our Marines back in as a kind of ex-post facto way of showing that we were sorry that these killings had taken place in the Sabra and Shatila camps which apparently were to some extent-they were not, I think, engineered by the Israelis but the Israelis did not seem to pose an objection and it was suggested that these Marines go back evidently as reassurance. So our Marines, and it was a very small unit, were then returned under somewhat false assumptions and became sitting ducks for those who disliked American policy because of the extent to which we had supported Israel in the preceding period.

Another thing that happened during the 1958 flap was a move to introduce Marines into the Persian Gulf. This was an interesting tale because right after the war broke out, Selwyn Lloyd flew over to Washington and there were high-powered discussions at the White House about the crisis in the Near East and so on. These discussions must have gotten into the question of protecting the oil fields in the Persian Gulf because I suddenly got a call, and it's stayed with me over these years because you don't get all that many calls from the top officers of the Department-picked up the phone and this voice said, "This is Freddy Reinhardt." He was at that point the Counselor of the Department up on the 7th floor, an office right across from Dulles'. I'd never laid eyes on him, I just knew that he was a very senior man. He said, "Do you know anything about the oil fields out there in Saudi Arabia?" And I said, "Well, yes a little. What do you want to know?" Well it turned out he wanted to know where the oil fields were, and so forth, and what about the oil fields in Kuwait, and would it be possible to use troops to protect the oil fields in Kuwait and in Saudi Arabia. And I drew a very sharp contrast between the situation in Kuwait where I said it would be possible because of the small size of the state and the concentration of the oil fields within it, actually physically protecting the fields by the introduction of a relatively small number of troops. But I said in Saudi Arabia the major Gawar field stretches for hundreds of miles and there are other fields all over the Eastern Province, and I just did not think it would be physically possible for any reasonable number of troops to have any impact on this situation. He said, "Oh, you've been out there, have you?" I said, "Why, yes." Well he said, "Could you write me a memorandum simply describing what you've been telling me over the phone?" So I wrote him such a memorandum, which was essentially describing the geography of the Eastern Province, but I marked it confidential and rushed it up to Reinhardt. And he said, "Let's go into the Secretary with this." We went in to see the Secretary but he wasn't there. Reinhardt said, "I'll see that he sees it." The Secretary was leaving the next day for meetings in London. And I learned later from a friend of mine in our Embassy in London that, when the question of troops defending the oil fields in the Persian Gulf came up, Dulles seemed "extraordinarily well briefed on the geography of the Eastern Province." So I guess he must have read my memorandum. Anyway, of course, no troops were introduced.

However, also stemming from those first meetings in the White House, I judge the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must have been present because the Pentagon, without I believe official orders from anywhere, decided as a precautionary measure to transfer from the Seventh Fleet a shipload of Marines to the Persian Gulf, just so they would have them in the area because they had nothing anywhere near the area. In case it was decided that Marines should be used, you know, they'd then have them in place. And they began sending me daily bulletins of the progress of these Marines across the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. And I got more and more agitated with every passing day because here were these Marines getting closer and closer to the Persian Gulf. And I called my contacts in the Pentagon and said, "What are these fellows going to do?" "Oh, don't you worry about that, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have this thing under control." When I asked, "What are they going to do when they get in the Persian Gulf?" they answered, "They will circle over the horizon." I said, "It's July. Are these ships air-conditioned?" They said, "We don't know about that." "Well, if they're not air-conditioned" I replied, "you're going to have so many cases of heat stroke that every hospital from Abu Dhabi to Dhahran is going to be jammed with prostrate American Marines. This isn't going to be very helpful in carrying on our foreign policy." "Don't you worry about that," I was told, "the Joint Chiefs have thought about all these things and there's not going to be any problem."

Well, I kept asking. Finally the Pentagon said to me, "The Marines tomorrow will chop to CINCNELM." I said, "What's that mean?" They said, "That means they will come under command of the Admiral in London, the Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleet." I said, "What's he going to do with them? Is he going to send them into the Persian Gulf?" "We don't know because they'll be under command of that Admiral." So I called the Embassy in London and I said, "Can you go along to CINCNELM staff and find out what it is they plan to do with these Marines that are going to come under their command tomorrow." So they did, and they called back and said, "These guys had never heard of these Marines. They don't have any use for them. They don't know what they're going to do with them when they come under their command." So, strengthened by that information, and also the general situation having calmed down, I was able to get that ship turned around the day before it came under command of CINCNELM, and start it on its way back to Manila, I guess. And I was just a little amused that on the way back, of course, they immediately asked for shore leave in Karachi or Bombay, or Calcutta, or somewhere, because they'd been at sea for a long time. The tensions were still such in that area, however, that no port would permit the ship to land until they got back to Singapore. So there was another instance where we prevented something happening which could have had some unfortunate repercussions.

Q: Very good. Following your Departmental assignment I see from your biography that you then attended the Senior Seminar at the Department.

BREWER: Well, that's right. But I wanted to make one or two points if I'm not going on too long about our role-the office there, the Egyptian desk-in restoring normal relations with Egypt over the period 1958 to 1961 and what we called a normalization program and it worked. As I said, I think the atmosphere was favorable because of what had happened as a result of the Lebanese landings, but the fact of the matter was that I found on taking over the desk that there were a number of annoying, niggling little matters on which the United States was putting roadblocks in the way of normal contacts with the Egyptian government. I can give you one example. For example, the Egyptian government was not able to import from the United States axle grease for its civilian trucks because someone in the Department of Commerce had concluded that axle grease might also go into military trucks and we had a ban on any exports of items that might be for military purposes and so the Department of Commerce, without checking with the Department of State, had in effect extended the ban to include items which were primarily for civilian use.

Well, gradually over a period of months even years, we removed these what you might call servitudes on our relationship. There had been no cultural exchanges. We restored cultural exchanges. We made a great effort to assist in the clearing of the Suez Canal. We facilitated this by providing, I think it was the largest dredge in the world at that time which was the property of the US Corps of Engineers. We got General Wheeler, who was in charge of the Corps at that time, interested in this project, and he went over. And the Egyptians were, I think, appreciative of these efforts on our part which we were not making primarily, or even at all, because we thought the Egyptians were so wonderful. But simply because we didn't see there was any particular need to penalize the Egyptian government unduly. We had normal diplomatic relations with them and we thought the entire relationship should be normal.

Well, this normalization continued up to the stage that we finally went to annual PL 480 Title I wheat programs because they had a terrible food shortage and we had a huge surplus at that time of wheat. But we provided it to the Egyptian government on a year-to-year basis. There were new negotiations every year and the idea was that we would unload our surpluses, the Egyptians would get the food, and the Egyptians would pay for it in Egyptian pounds which would then be set aside for either economic development or use by our Embassy and for other purposes as defined in the law that had passed the Congress not too many years before.

Now the question arose early in 1961 in the Kennedy Administration whether we should not move beyond this in our relations with Egypt, because our relations at that time were really back to normal. And I can still recall a discussion with my office director and he said, "Well now, suppose we take the next step and suppose we suggest a multi- year commitment for PL 480? What will that do?" And I said, "Well my hunch is that the Egyptians will then ask us for arms," as they had in fact done back in 1953, I think it was, and been turned down. And the director said, "Well, of course, we won't be in a position to reply favorably, will we?" I said, "No, and so our relations with them get hurt." He said, "Then I think we don't wish to be in that situation, do we?" And I said, "No, we don't." So we decided that, while relations should be normal, it would be a mistake to try and move beyond that stage because in doing so you would raise expectations in Egypt which by the very nature of things could not be met by the United States.

Q: Bill, when we broke off you were discussing US- Egyptian relations. Do you want to continue with that thought?

BREWER: Yes, because I think it was a rather significant improvement in the relationship that we worked out over a period of years there from 1958 to 1961. And one of the elements in the improved relationship was our effort to assist the Egyptians with respect to the Suez Canal. You will remember that in the 1956 war the Canal had been blocked by Egyptian vessels being sunk in the channel-I forget, there were 20-25 vessels, the place was a mess. So when the war was over the thing was, how do you clear this? And it was decided that the Corps of Engineers of the United States Army could be helpful and we encouraged this approach because our feeling was that we were not so much doing something for Egypt, as we were doing something for international commerce. And our studies showed that Egyptian use of the Canal was virtually nil, the major users were, oh I don't know, Norway and Liberia and the United Kingdom and so on. So it was very much in our interests, and in the interests of all maritime powers to get the canal functioning again. And not only functioning, but the Egyptians made the point that as the result in part of the war the world was now building larger and deeper tankers. So that if they were not careful, even though they had the canal reopened, it would not be used very much because a lot of the ships would no longer be able to go through it. So there was a suggestion that the canal should be widened and deepened and the Egyptians made an application to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for funds to accomplish this project which was to have been worked out using the very substantial dredge of the Corps of Engineers that had made available to help in the clearing process.

Now, friends of Israel and the Israeli government viewed this with a jaundiced eye because in their view we were assisting Egypt and this was monstrous and something that ought to be blocked at all costs. But we took the position, as I say, that this was, in fact, something in the aid of international commerce more than it was in the aid of the Egyptian state. We therefore decided that we would go ahead and we would cast our vote in the IBRD meeting in favor of this project and that that would mean, because of the weight that our vote had in IBRD voting, that would mean that the project would be approved.

But we decided that it would be important to head off what we expected to be considerable adverse criticism from the Congress for this action. And my boss at the time- Armin Meyer-had a first rate idea, namely send a letter in- we always, as you know, were writing letters to Congressmen in response to their requests for information or criticisms or whatever they referred from their constituents-that's one of the things we spend a lot of time doing in the State Department-but Armin thought that in this situation we should take the initiative. And we should write every Senator explaining precisely the rationale behind our vote and should send a similar letter to every member of the House who had expressed concern to us on the issue. So I drafted such a letter and it was worked over and approved and we got that letter on the desk of every member of the Senate and every interested member of the House by about 10:00 in the morning of a Monday on the day that the vote was going to be taken. The vote was taken about noon. And we were astonished. We had only, as I recall, two or maybe three letters from the Congress about that vote. Two of them were critical, and one expressed appreciation to us for providing him in advance with the rationale which he could use with his constituents if any of them inquired.

So I think this shows the importance of accurate up-to- date and complete explanation to the Congress in terms of smoothing the path for what might have otherwise have been a controversial act by the United States.

Q: Very interesting.

BREWER: Then there is something else that I think is interesting in this period which is not directly related to my role on the Egyptian desk. But you may recall that it was in this period that they began having non- aligned conferences. The major non-aligned states were Yugoslavia, India, Indonesia and Egypt, so I was involved from that standpoint. And the second non-aligned conference was to be convened in Belgrade in, I believe August, 1961. And the question came up in the spring as to what should our attitude be toward the conference, toward attendance at the conference by countries we regarded as friendly, what position should we take when the conference convened, etc., etc.

And we decided in NE that the smart move was to recognize the basic rule of diplomacy that, if you take the position that anyone who is not for us, is against us, you wind up with a lot of people against you. If you say anybody who is not against us is for us, you wind up with a lot of people in your camp. So we decided that the correct policy was to take no step to discourage attendance at this meeting, and to take the position that it was perfectly legitimate exercise of sovereignty on the part of the states concerned. And we naturally hoped that they would view international issues at the meeting from an impartial perspective, and that this was something that did not give us any particular concern.

Well, in order to try to get this view spread throughout the Department, and you know how difficult it is sometimes to get clearances from the various geographic bureaus, my name was sent up to the Secretary to be designated as coordinator of US policy toward the non-aligned conference in Belgrade, and he approved this. So I became the coordinator. What I took that to mean was that I was supposed to prepare draft instructions to go out worldwide regarding the attitude that we would take on the conference, and get those instructions approved and then they would be sent out and that would be that. And I prepared such instructions along the lines I've outlined. As I recall I had no particular difficulty clearing them with every Bureau except the Latin American Bureau. And the Latin Americans were just not going to accept this at all. They said, "This is ridiculous, this is an abdication of our traditional role. We expect our friends to stand up and be counted. We do not expect our friends to go to such a terrible meeting where these sorts of crypto-Communists are likely to gather and accordingly we will in no circumstances clear off on your instructions."

Well, at that point I figured I couldn't bargain with them. We held two diametrically opposed points of view. So I said, "We're going to send our instructions forward for approval by the seventh floor-I think it was the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Alex Johnson-and if you wish, you can draft your own instructions." So sure enough, they drafted diametrically opposed instructions which they sent forward, which would have gone to their posts, I think, not to others in the world. And one of my finest moments in the State Department was to come in the next morning-you remember how the comeback copies of the telegrams and airgrams always came in the first thing in the morning, so you knew what had been signed, and what had been changed perhaps, and what was sent out-and I came in in the morning and I found that Alex Johnson had signed my instructions and had refused to sign theirs.

Q: Bill, I'm going to interrupt you here because I think we're coming to the end of our first side of the tape. All right, we're now on the second side. Go ahead from where we left off.

BREWER: Well, if I could just conclude about this non-aligned conference, 1961. That really took care of my responsibilities except for an amusing footnote. About a month later, as I recall, I heard from a friend of mine that a top level meeting was being convened in the office of the head of the Policy Planning Council to discuss US policy toward the non-aligned meeting. And this chap said, "Don't you think you ought to be there?" And I said, "Well, yes, I guess perhaps I should but I haven't been invited." And I think he said, "Well, why don't you come and sit in the back of the room and nobody is going to care." So I did. And I went up and sat in the back of the room and there all the high-powered types in the Department were sitting around the table and the meeting was chaired by the head of the Policy Planning Council. And it turned out it had been called at the request of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., one of the White House Special Assistants who'd been asked by President Kennedy to follow this matter. So Schlesinger was there and he said, "Well now, I just want to know what the Department of State has been doing with respect to this non-aligned meeting that's coming up in Belgrade?" And there was silence around the table, and nobody spoke up, nobody seemed to know anything about my little effort and the policy that we had approved. So finally with great timidity I spoke up from the back of the room, and I said, "Possibly I can enlighten you, sir." And I proceeded to outline the steps that had been taken and the policy that we had laid down. And when I got through Schlesinger said, "Thank you very much. I don't think I have any other questions." And that was the end of the meeting.

Q: Very good. In 1961 you were assigned to the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy. Any comments you'd like to make on that?

BREWER: None, other than to say that it was an extremely valuable year for me, and if I had to stress one aspect of it I would say that the opportunity to visit so many different parts of the United States, including Puerto Rico, and become familiar with their problems, some of their industries, their economic activities, and so on, was a tremendous help to me later on in the Foreign Service. And I'm delighted to see that that type of tour is still being undertaken by the Senior Seminar.

Q: Your next overseas assignment was as Deputy Chief of Mission at our Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan.

BREWER: Yes, and that was a fascinating assignment because Afghanistan, at that time, was the only non-Communist country in the world that bordered both the Soviet Union and China. And it therefore afforded an interesting vantage point from which to observe, first the relatively good relations between those two Communist countries, and then their rapid deterioration after 1961-'62, I guess it was.

When I went out the key issue in the briefings that I got seemed to be, as far as Washington was concerned, whether the Afghan regime had, in the famous phrase, "passed the point of no return" in its relations with Communist Russia. I took this to mean the question of whether the government in Kabul had so come under the influence of Moscow as to be considered a virtual satellite. Well, on my arrival I found a little to my surprise that the Kabul government was nowhere near being a satellite of the Soviet Union. It was quite true that it paid a good deal of attention to Soviet views as might be expected from a country with a huge common border with one of the two superpowers, but it sought to balance, as far as it could, its relations with the Soviet Union with good relations with the United States. And it seemed to me that our role should be to do what we could to enhance the opportunity of the Afghan authorities to develop this balanced relationship. And Ambassador Steeves, who was a first rate chief during this period, certainly had the view that an effective bilateral relationship could be continued and even expanded.

I found on my arrival, for example, one of the things that I was told, as an example of how nasty the Afghan government was to us, that "The diplomats were not permitted to travel outside of Kabul." And I said, "Well, why is that?" And I was told: "Because we send notes to the Foreign Office as we are required to do, requesting permission to travel to some particular province, and we never get a reply, which constitutes a refusal, you see, so we can't go." I said, "Why don't we try this? Why don't we send them a note saying that we are planning to go on such-and- such dates next month to this province, and see what will happen if we do that." I said, "My suspicion is that the Afghan bureaucrats in the Foreign Office simply do not want to take a decision." And this, of course, turned out to be the case. So by modifying our own note we expanded our operations and we were able to visit anywhere we wished in Afghanistan without hindrance except the Wakhkhan Corridor which was a very restricted area and we were generally not permitted to go there. So some of us did a good deal of traveling in those years in Afghanistan. But that's simply one minor illustration of how a change in approach can actually produce a modification in policy which is helpful.

Another thing we did. This was at a time when the Kennedy administration was getting started and was pushing the Peace Corps concept. We decided that we ought to try to negotiate a Peace Corps agreement with Afghanistan because it was manifest that they needed the type of assistance that the Peace Corps could provide. And since they wouldn't have to pay for it, it seemed that this would be something that ought to appeal to the Afghan government. So I carried out the negotiations with the head of the Economic Section of the Foreign Ministry and they were indeed interested. And, in fact, in due course he informed me that the Afghan government had decided to accept the Peace Corps and they would sign an agreement. I said, "Fine. Now we've only got one question left and that is 'what size unit do you wish to come first, how large, how many volunteers do you want in the first unit?'" And he thought for a minute, and he said, "What is the smallest Peace Corps unit anywhere in the world?" And I said, "I don't know, but I can find out." And, of course, I did find out. It turned out that we had a unit of nine in Liberia. So I went back to him and I said, "We have a unit of nine in Liberia." He said, "Fine, we'll have nine."

The first Peace Corps unit into Afghanistan consisted of a mere nine volunteers. They were personally selected, however, by the Peace Corps Director, who was a very able individual, Bob Steiner who had grown up in Iran and spoke Persian which was the language used in Afghanistan at that time, and had a very good sense of the type of person who would go down very well with the Afghan mentality. And as a result I think each of these nine individual volunteers was in his or her own way outstanding. And so great an impact did they make, this first unit, that the Afghans couldn't have enough of the Peace Corps thereafter. I don't remember the exact figures, but I think the second unit was about 75, and I think the third unit they wanted over 120 or something. They would take all the Peace Corps volunteers that we could find as a result of that. We had Peace Corps volunteers up near the Soviet frontier that didn't seem to bother them. So that this made a tremendous and favorable impact on our relationship.

At the same time we continued a major AID program which had been going on prior to my arrival because it was manifest that the Afghans needed road development, agricultural development, and various other things at which we were working. These projects were also helpful. They were not, as is sometimes seen, in competition with the Russians. The Russians were also doing the same kind of thing, but they were doing projects in different areas. And the Afghans were rather shrewd in trying to coordinate the two. For example: their number one national roadnet, which forms a "U" from Herat around Kandahar and then up to Kabul; the Afghans had the Russians building the road from Herat to Kandahar and the Americans building the road from Kandahar to Kabul. This gave rise to an interesting exchange which shows that our relations were then not all that bad with the Russians on the spot.

The head of the Russian aid mission sought an appointment with the head of our AID mission and he came in to him, and he said, "Look, you know these road projects that we're working on..." He said, "Where precisely in Kandahar is your project terminating?" And our man told him. And he said, "Well, that's what I was afraid of. That's about three-quarters of a mile from where our project is starting. Don't you agree that we ought to link these two roads up to avoid any difficulty with the Afghans when the projects are finished?" And our man said he certainly did. So they split the difference and each one extended the project approximately one-half a mile or less, a third of a mile, and the two roads were linked up in Kandahar.

And this shows that sometimes when you get closer to a particular situation, the relationships and the activity are not quite the exaggerated cold war nature as is shown by the media back in this country.

Another aspect of our AID program which I think was particularly helpful in maintaining and developing good relations with the Afghan government was that, even after Pakistan closed the border with Afghanistan, and we had brought all our AID supplies through Pakistan because it was economic, Ambassador Steeves, with our strong support, took the position that we should continue to bring in supplies for the road via Iran even though it was more expensive because the alternative, that is shutting down the project would turn out to be even more expensive because of various claims that all the contractors would have on the US Government. And that furthermore, by keeping the an option open for the Afghans, that is not giving them the impression that they were isolated and driven into a corner, the Afghans would be more likely to work out some sort of settlement with the Pakistanis which, of course, was something that we favored.

Well, we had some difficulty convincing Washington of this but in due course we did. And Washington therefore continued its assistance, although I think perhaps at a somewhat reduced level of whatever could be transported across Iran. And within a matter of, I think, two months-I have forgotten now exactly the time schedule here-the Afghans were negotiating with the Pakistanis and the Pakistanis had reopened the border. And I am convinced that if it had not been for that position that we took at the Embassy-I think this is early 1965, maybe late 1964-why the closure of the border would have been much more long lasting and would have had a much more deleterious impact on the total western position in that part of the world.

While we were in Afghanistan occurred the famous White Revolution of King Zahir Shah. He had been King for, oh I don't know, 30 years practically at that time, because he became King when he was 19. But for most of those 30 years the power in Afghanistan had either been one of his uncles or, after they died, his first cousin, Sardar Mohammad Daud, who was Prime Minister when I got there. Well, the King finally decided he'd had enough of this with his relatives in effect running the country. And in 1963, I think it was, he took steps which prompted Daud to say, "Well then, I resign." Which was what the King hoped would happen. Daud figured the King would say, "Oh, no, no, you mustn't do that." But in this case, of course, the King crossed him up and said, "Fine, your resignation is accepted." So Daud was out on his ear and they set up a commoner government. This was a first for Afghanistan with a Prime Minister, who had an engineering degree from, I think, Germany. The Interior Minister had a degree from, I think, Columbia in the United States. It was a government, a cabinet of technocrats, of commoners who were trained in the west outside Afghanistan and who had the interests of their country very much at heart. And the King supported this development wholeheartedly.

We found this an extremely encouraging development and supported it as far as we could. And at the time I left I would say that our relations with Afghanistan were really excellent and there was no longer the slightest question of the Afghan government going past the point of no return in its relations with the Soviet Union. This perhaps was illustrated at the time of President Kennedy's assassination because Ambassador Steeves arranged a very impressive memorial service for the late President at his residence, and we invited all the Afghan authorities including the Cabinet. And I was at the gate to greet the senior people arriving, and when the Prime Minister came he said to me, "Would the Ambassador mind if I said a few words during the service?" And I said, "I don't think so. I'll ask him and I'll let you know." And I did, and of course Ambassador Steeves said, "No, there's no objection." So Prime Minister Mohammad Yusuf delivered a eulogy for the dead American president at this memorial service. And I think that indicates the fundamental attitude of the Afghan government at that time towards Americans and the United States.

Q: When you left Afghanistan you returned to the Department and were assigned to the Policy Planning Council. Do you have any comments on that assignment?

BREWER: Well, I was the Near East, North African regional member of the Council and it was an interesting opportunity to observe traffic from throughout the region, and get to know a little something about North Africa which I hadn't known before. But, frankly I found the assignment frustrating because it was not a line agency in the State Department. By that I mean it was not one of the groups whose concurrence had to be obtained if you wanted to modify policy. You could write policy papers, and seek to influence policy by suggestions but there was no way that your views necessarily had to be taken into account. As for example the views of some of the geographic bureaus had to be taken into account if the Bureau of Near Eastern & South Asian Affairs wanted to do something. And this I found very frustrating, and I think in fact it was a mistake. I think that the clearance procedure should have been expanded to give more authority, more influence, to members of the Policy Planning Council. But, be that as it may, we had very little influence and we spent most of our time discussing blue sky type of things such as trying to plan what US policy should be for the 1970s, and things of that nature, which were not, in my judgement, particularly helpful in resolving the problems at hand.

Q: Then you were the Country Director for Arabian Peninsula states?

BREWER: Yes. I was very pleased to be transferred from the Policy Planning Council after only a year, back to what I considered my home in the Department, the former Office of Near Eastern Affairs. The office had been abolished and the desks had all been upgraded so I became Country Director for the Arabian Peninsula which included the entire area and, of course, the Persian Gulf states, and Yemen and Muscat, and all the rest of it. So it was a big job and I thoroughly enjoyed being back in operations and having more of an impact, I thought, on day-to-day policy decisions.

The first thing I did was to go out on a month-long trip to my new area and I was able to circle Arabia by air though even in those days you could not do it entirely by commercial flights. This was 1967. I had to get the Air Attaché's plane from Addis Ababa come and it took me from Sharjah to Muscat, and Muscat to Aden. But otherwise...I guess from Aden we flew up to Yemen in an AID aircraft from Yemen. But otherwise they were commercial flights. It was very interesting to see the progress that had taken place in these areas since I had last served in Jeddah and visited Yemen in 1949-1951.

I don't know how much detail you want me to go into with respect to this assignment. There were a number of things that I think we accomplished in the Arabian Peninsula at this time, particularly with reference to the 1967 Arab- Israeli war, which you remember broke out on June 6th. We were somewhat peripheral to the main contest but we did seek as far as possible to reduce the adverse impact on our position that would come from Saudi Arabia and other oil producing states and might conceivably result in an oil boycott. As you remember, of course, there was no significant oil boycott in 1967. One of the things that I think helped had to do with the evacuation of American citizens from the area because there was great discussion just at the time of the outbreak of hostilities-I think perhaps the day before we knew hostilities were coming-there was great discussion in the Department all during that day-what about the evacuation of Americans from the area, and then what constituted the area, and who should be evacuated. And some of our posts, I think Damascus was one, were very reluctant to see Americans evacuated and as a result no resolution to the problem had been reached by the time we went home about 8:00 at night.

Well, the next morning I came in to work and found a comeback copy of a telegram signed by the Deputy Under Secretary, who at that time was Foy Kohler, sent to all our Near Eastern posts saying all American citizens are to be evacuated. And I thought, "My gosh, what's all this?" Because this had gone among other places, to Kuwait, to Dhahran, to Jeddah, and Aden, and there was no particular reason in most of those posts why Americans should be evacuated. And in fact this would send a signal to the Kuwait government and the Saudi government that we thought the situation was even worse than it was, and we would get them even more upset than they already were if we went ahead and evacuated from these areas. So I said to my boss, "What are we going to do?" And he said, "Why don't you write a telegram to your posts in effect rescinding the circular message. See if you can get Mr. Kohler to sign it?" So I drafted something, I can't remember how I drafted it but the idea was, of course, to avoid directly rescinding the message while in fact getting across the word that nobody had to be evacuated. And I prepared some Byzantine language and took it in to Mr. Kohler and he signed it without batting an eye. Apparently he had simply cut the Gordian knot late the previous night because the White House had gotten on the phone and said, "Look, something has got to be done about this issue. The American people are going to be very upset" or words to that effect. So he just fired off this message and he was happy to have it restricted.

Now, I should point out as a footnote. We had particular problems in southern Yemen where Aden is located. And we had been debating entirely separate from this whole issue, the desirability of evacuating Americans from Aden but had reached no decision. So I decided that I would send the telegram rescinding the Department's message only to Kuwait, Dhahran and Jeddah, but not to Aden. So, in fact, the Americans were withdrawn from Aden but I heard later that my telegram arrived in Dhahran just as the first Americans were beginning to pack up and go down to the airfield to get on a plane to get out of Saudi Arabia. And, of course, everybody was very relieved. So I think that kind of action can be extremely helpful in diplomacy and as I have thought about this interview over the last couple of days, it seems to me that if, as, and when I've been able to accomplish anything, it was more likely to be in the area of preventing some bad thing from happening, than in achieving any positive good. But on the other hand if you can prevent something bad from happening, the situation is not made any worse. And that I think was helpful at that time.

On the positive side, we encouraged the first Washington contacts with the Gulf states other than Kuwait which were we thought probably going to become independent fairly soon. And we arranged for the first state visit of the Ruler of Kuwait to President Johnson. I think it was the final state visit paid to President Johnson. And in general we tried to focus the attention of higher-level people in Washington on the problems and potentialities of this oil-rich region. At the same time I was particularly disturbed as signs mounted that the British, who had had a naval presence in the Persian Gulf for over a hundred years, were probably going to terminate this presence. And this seemed to me entirely unnecessary because the expense was relatively modest-I think they had maybe two frigates under a man with the wonderful name of Snopg ("Snopgee"), the Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf-and the expense was not very great. They were doing in fact with mirrors what they had formerly done with real force. So that, it seemed to me, this could be continued and furthermore the various sheikhdoms in the region that were going to become independent were very much interested in the British maintaining some position, since they were nervous about their huge partner to the north, Iran, not to mention to some extent Iraq. And I tried to get the Secretary to focus on this issue, and I think we finally at the last minute did get him to sign-this would have been Secretary Rogers-to sign a message to London saying that he hoped the British would take no decision on this matter before a forthcoming visit of the Foreign Secretary to Washington, which was scheduled for the next week or something like that.

Well, of course, the British who knew that we would seek to dissuade them from this action naturally took the decision before the Foreign Secretary came to Washington and took it unilaterally and announced they were going to withdraw from the Persian Gulf in 1970. This, therefore, created a vacuum and I have always felt that we could have done more to try and prevent the creation of that vacuum because it would not have taken very much in my judgement to continue the British presence there and it would have been of great assistance in maintaining calm in the region in the 1970s, and I think in all probability preventing, by the presence of the British, things like the Iran-Iraq war from breaking out. But it was a breakdown of a system for regional security which had worked very well in the Persian Gulf for a hundred years. I always regretted that the United States did not take more initiative in trying to prevent this from happening.

Q: Bill, we've just about reached the end of our tape, so why don't we stop here and then we will continue with your appointment as Ambassador to Mauritius.

Tape 2, side A

Q: Interview with Ambassador William D. Brewer. Bill, in 1970 you received your appointment as Ambassador to Mauritius. How did that come about? Was it a surprise to you? Did you have any choice, or was that just what you drew?

BREWER: Well, it wasn't entirely a surprise because I was due for an Ambassadorial assignment, and one or two posts had been suggested and I jumped at the proposal that Mauritius might be the one because I had always heard about Mauritius and I relished the opportunity to be the first Ambassador who would serve in Mauritius. So it did not come as a complete surprise although, of course, I was very pleased. You want me to continue with...

Q: Yes, why don't you.

BREWER: I did go out to Mauritius in...

Q: First of all, had you ever been there before? Did you know anything about the place?

BREWER: No. Well, I knew a little about the place because I had collected stamps as a boy and the Mauritian Penny Blue is the most valuable stamp in the world. I might say, as a sort of digression here, that anyone interested in any kind of international activity as an adult, whether it's the Foreign Service, or international banking, or international business, could do a lot worse than collect stamps, as a boy or girl, as a means of reinforcing his or her understanding of geography. We've been reading in recent days about how knowledge of geography in the United States has become so deplorable, and certainly one of the reasons that my geography was perhaps not bad was because I collected stamps as a kid.

But in any case, I went out there in June 1970 and found it a wonderful opportunity to set the tone of a relationship because we had not had an Ambassador Resident there previously. The country became independent only in 1968 and we had had a series of Charges until my appointment. It was in many ways an idyllic assignment. We had beautiful quarters. It's a lovely island, very similar I'm told to the Hawaiian Islands in character, magnificent beaches, I had a little sailboat, and so on. It was not, of course, in the first rank of concerns of the State Department on policy questions. But there were a couple of issues that were of some significance at that time.

One of them was the question of Soviet naval penetration of the Indian Ocean and this, I think, was one reason that we were interested in resuming this relationship. And I say resuming advisedly because I found on being assigned to Mauritius that in fact we had had an official relationship with Mauritius from 1794 to 1911. We'd had a consulate in Port Louis and we'd had Americans living on the island, we had a very heavy American-in fact, there were more American contacts with Mauritius than with any other area of the African continent except Tangier going back further. This had been completely erased from the collective memory of the State Department because, of course, nothing had happened since just before World War I.

Q: Would the whaling ships have had anything to do with this?

BREWER: Oh, yes. The whaling ships did. The Antarctic whaling fleet made Port Louis its headquarters from about 1820-1825 until 1860. And, in fact, in that year the then Consul went to the Mauritian authorities to protest a recent increase in port duties and other charges because if these duties and charges were not rescinded, the American whaling fleet would stop coming. Apparently the Mauritians felt confident that that wouldn't happen, so they said in effect, "We need the revenue, and we're not going to rescind the charges." So they kept the charges unduly high and the whaling fleet transferred to the Cape. And that was the end of the most significant period of our relationship with Mauritius. So it was very interesting to be able to kind of revive and recall some of these early ties when I got out there.

With respect to the Russian activity in the Indian Ocean, we also were interested in improving our position in that part of the world. And one of the decisions that was taken about the time I got out there was that we would build an austere naval facility at an atoll-a thousand miles or so south of Ceylon-called Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia used to be part of Mauritius when Mauritius was under the British. It was no longer part of Mauritius but we in the Embassy in Port Louis played a special role in the inauguration of the work on Diego Garcia and in the support of the SeaBees who were up there doing the work during the construction period.

We had, for example, for one brief period of a couple of months-I think we had an American naval ship a week in Port Louis-and as you may recall from your days as a Consul, when you had a naval visit there was a certain amount of activity. So we were working flat-out on naval visits, and we were assisting them in every way we could. And the thing that was of real assistance was that for the first ship to arrive-you see there was nothing on Diego Garcia, it was a sort of abandoned atoll-the population, that had lived there picking coconuts had been moved off. And so the SeaBees were going to arrive on the beach and start first, I guess, putting up tents or whatever they do. And the question was, where were they going to arrive from. The mother ship sailed from Norfolk, but it was felt that there were not accommodations for all those SeaBees for that long ocean voyage, and the question was where would they be picked up. And I proposed to the Department that they be flown into Mauritius and transferred to the ship and go on from there. The Department, the Bureau of African Affairs, initially reacted very nervously to this. This would maybe upset the non-aligned character of the Mauritian regime and this was something we ought not get involved in. So I cabled, "Why don't we ask the Prime Minister? If he says no, he says no, but what's the objection in raising this?" "Well," they said, "Okay." So I went along and had a meeting with Prime Minister Ramgoolam, who was very cooperative. He said, "I don't see any objection to this." Then he turned to me a little owlshly and said, "You don't think I have to raise this in the full cabinet, do you?" I said, "That's entirely up to you." I don't think he did. So, in fact, he was probably the only Mauritian official who knew about this. But never mind, we had our clearance and the SeaBees were flown into Plaisance airport, and we made arrangements to transfer them to the port by bus. And they got on the ship and sailed away to Diego Garcia without mishap and no news of this move ever surfaced during my entire time in Port Louis. So it was a very effective first step in the construction of this facility.

The Mauritian government proved exceedingly hospitable to US navy visits, and this was very encouraging to the Navy at a time when some other ports on the Indian Ocean were raising restrictions because either of the suspicion that they might carry atomic weapons, or simply a non-aligned view on the part of the government of the time in the country concerned. It was very nice to be able to work closely with a government that still recognized its fundamental ties with the west. And we did all we could to improve those ties to the point that the number two man in the government, Veerasamy Ringadoo, we actually sent to the United States to Bethesda Naval Hospital where he had a major heart operation which I believe he thinks extended his life considerably and enabled him to become Prime Minister when old Ramgoolam finally retired. So that this was a concrete way that we could show our appreciation for what the Mauritians were doing to assist us.

Another thing we did to develop the relationship was to introduce a small Peace Corps operation. I signed the agreement with Prime Minister Ramgoolam, and we brought in a number of units, never very large because, of course, the country was small. We tried to fine-tune these units to the needs of the country. They didn't need much English teaching, for example, but they did need anything which would assist them in economic development. And one of the things we did which seemed helpful at the time I left-I hope it turned out to be helpful-was to get them started on a shrimp industry. Because Europe has an apparently insatiable desire for shrimp and the Mauritians could raise shrimp but at the time we were there, there were few suitable shrimp being farmed around Mauritius. So we got several Peace Corps volunteers in there and they showed them how to build these little ponds where the shrimp could propagate, and then we had a Hawaiian expert fly in from Honolulu escorting five pregnant shrimp-one of which died on the way-but never mind, four arrived intact and each shrimp apparently produces something between 50,000 and 100,000 baby shrimps so that very swiftly you have a substantial shrimp industry. And I went out and inspected it after these young shrimp had been born and were swimming around, and it looked as if this was going to get started and be an effective addition to the development of the country.

We worked with the Mauritian fisheries people. We also assisted on a number of other projects and we helped Mauritius maintain and I believe slightly enlarge its sugar quota in the United States. This was extremely important to Mauritius because its major output, at that time, was sugar- something like 600,000 tons a year. And there seemed to be no reason why the United States should close off Mauritian sugar as had been at one stage proposed. We encouraged a visit by the chairman of the House Agricultural Committee with, I believe, four of his colleagues and they were wined and dined and I think they left with a favorable impression of Mauritius. And as a result when the bill was voted it included a slight increase for Mauritius and they were absolutely delighted.

Q: Very good. Would you like to continue on that assignment on Mauritius, or should we move on to Sudan?

BREWER: Well, I might say one or two things about personalities, although I don't want to say very much because the country is very small. The Prime Minister, while I was there, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, was a short roly-poly man who had begun life as a doctor. He had been one of the first two non-Franco-Mauritians, I think, to leave the country for training in England. And he had gone into politics, he had a natural gift as a politician, and he had become head of the dominant Labor Party. He saw the need to cooperate with the British who, at that time, still ran Mauritius under a Colonial Governor. And he and the British developed a very useful working relationship as the result of which, when the country became independent, there was no difficulty about it whatever, and Ramgoolam became Prime Minister, and his cabinet took over as an independent cabinet. This, I think, might have been a model for a peaceful transfer of authority.

But there was one interesting thing about the transfer of authority which struck me at the time I was there. You know, of course, the British do not have a written constitution, but one of the things they insist for every colony before it becomes independent is that it have a written constitution because they have to have that document passed through Parliament apparently as a means of constituting the act of independence, you see. So more or less automatically all of the colonies that have become independent wind up with written constitutions which means that thereafter they are much more interested in American principles of judicial review, and following written articles and written constitution, than in the British precedent way of doing things. And I was consulted more than once by the Chief Justice of the Mauritius Supreme Court who wanted to get a case or two from the Supreme Court files because they shed light on some case that was coming up before the Mauritian Supreme Court. This is a little known fact about how our legal system has, without any particular effort on our part, been spread to many areas of the world simply because they now have written constitutions as we do, and therefore go at the same question of judicial review from the same standpoint as we do.

The role of the British was very modest when I was there but they were still in the background. They still had a significant role with respect to the Special Mobile Force, which was the military force, or a kind of gendarmerie force, on the island. And they still had one or two officials in the Special Branch in a sort of intelligence and advisory role, and they were of assistance on security problems. So the country really did not have much in the way of turbulence. This began to develop during the latter part of my stay when the left-wing MMM (Mouvement Militant Mauricien) came along under the direction of a number of Hindu politicians and a Franco-Mauritian who had been very much impressed by the student revolt, in France in 1968-he had apparently been a student there and had been very much impressed by the movement to the barricades, etc., and he wanted to carry out this kind of thing in Mauritius. They had some difficulties with the MMM after I left. But I think that perhaps covers Mauritius. It was not a very significant assignment, but a thoroughly enjoyable one and I hope that I helped get our relations off to a good start.

Q: Very good. Then in 1973 you were assigned as Ambassador to the Republic of the Sudan. Was that a surprise to you again or would you think of that in a kind of...

BREWER: Well, this was much more of a surprise. I knew, of course, that there was a vacancy because as you know my friend Cleo Noel had been assassinated, and I was not clear whether the Department was going to fill that position or not. But I was ready to leave Mauritius and so when they asked me if I would go to Khartoum, why I thought that was a perfectly appropriate next move. Because although it was in the African Bureau, in fact the Sudan had been part of my parish when I was in charge of Egyptian affairs, and it is an Arab-speaking country. The majority of the population regards itself as Arab, rather than African. So I felt I was returning to the Arab world, and this, I think, perhaps was the reason for my appointment.

It was, however, a very much different assignment from Mauritius. The climate is unpleasant, it is terribly hot, one is surrounded by desert, the Sudanese are entirely different from the relatively sophisticated Mauritians. It was nice to get back to the Arabic but there were lingering tensions as the result of the assassination of Ambassador Noel and his deputy Curt Moore four months, I think, before my arrival. So it was in every way a difficult but a very challenging assignment.

The reason I was sent-the reason an Ambassador was sent-was that the Department had decided that the position to take, because of our overall interests in the Sudan, was that we would continue relations on a normal basis on the understanding, which we had been assured was correct by the Sudanese government, that justice would be done to the perpetrators of these assassinations who had been captured by the Sudanese. They were Palestinians, as you know, members of Black September, and were going to be brought to trial, and presumably to be sentenced. And as long as this was being done there didn't seem to be any reason why we should not continue a relatively normal relationship. So that was the basis on which I was sent out.

However, I remember having a discussion with Assistant Secretary Newsom, I think it was, before I went out. And I said, "Suppose, of course, that something happens with respect to these people?" And we agreed that the first thing that ought to happen is that I should be summoned home for consultation. We would then see what we did. And during the fall, and during the winter we watched the progress of the trial very closely. We had a Sudanese lawyer who was advising us and who was observing the trial- they would not permit officers from the Embassy to be present. And things went normally. I was concerned, however, that in the end President Nimeiri, with whom I had developed a relatively good relationship, would come under tremendous pressure to either pardon the defendants, or somehow commute the sentences, or do something of this kind. And I therefore felt that we had to weigh in with the President personally as soon as the verdicts were announced by the court. And I even prepared a long telegram of instructions to myself which I then sent to the Department and asked for their authority on a contingency basis, because I didn't know how much time we would have to carry out these instructions with the President once the trial court had announced its verdict. Well, we all under-estimated the speed and cleverness of the Sudanese when they wished to act. The Sudanese had indeed decided that they had to do something, that these people represented a hot potato. They did not want their missions abroad subject to attack by Palestinians and all the rest of it. They were on the horns of a dilemma, they didn't want the Palestinians to get away scot free, but on the other hand they really didn't want to hold them in Sudanese jails for extended periods of time. So what they did, obviously carefully coordinated in advance- and one of the things that we didn't do, and I blame myself for this- we did not think that the Sudanese machinery would be capable of doing this at the speed with which it did. I think it went something like this- the trial was concluded in late June, 1974, and a verdict of "guilty" was brought in about 10:00 in the morning. This was then appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court was convened at about 10:30, and the Supreme Court found in about 30 minutes that they confirmed the sentence which was then referred to the President for ratification, and the President then confirmed the sentence but ordered that it be carried out in Egypt- they having had some contact with the Egyptian government, and the defendants were then put on a plane under escort with a senior man from the Foreign Ministry, and flown to Cairo, all by 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon. And we did not hear of this until that evening because everything in the Sudan shuts down about 2:00- they have these long siestas, you see. And the idea of anything like this being done at that hour of the day simply never occurred to anyone. And the Sudanese had obviously acted in order to avoid the type of appeal that I was in fact hoping to be authorized to make.

So the next thing was that I had to get orders to come home and after some backing-and-forthing with the Department, because Secretary Kissinger, I think, wanted to be personally involved in this, why I did receive instructions to see Nimeiri, and read him the riot act for this action, and then tell him that I was being recalled, and I had no way of predicting when our relationship might be returned to a normal basis. And I can still remember seeing the President. I had great difficulty getting an appointment because, of course, they wished to avoid the appointment, but I insisted and they finally made him available. And I saw him the next morning and he said they simply couldn't face the heat that would be generated if they had hung on to these prisoners. They didn't have the facilities and so forth to protect them. And I said to him that I recalled the motto of President Truman, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen". I said it had been a source of astonishment to me that the Sudanese government, which had been so upright and prided itself on being such a courageous and independent outfit, would take this craven-hearted action after being courageous enough to hold these people for the better part of ten months, and sentence them to seven or eight years, or whatever it was, in jail.

Well, I don't think he had been well advised by his advisers. I don't know but I have the impression that he had been told that the Americans would make a fuss, but they wouldn't make much fuss, and that this therefore was the thing to do. And I think he was somewhat shaken, and he seemed subdued, by the strong reaction that we had.

So, anyway, I went home and had a discussion with Secretary Kissinger about where we would go from here in our relations with the Sudanese. And, of course, there were points on both sides. On the one hand the Sudanese had had nothing to do with the original crime. Their only blunder had been that they had handed the defendants, once proclaimed guilty, off to Egypt where the Egyptians were assuring us they were being held in close confinement. I was always a little uncertain about that, but in any case that was the assurance from a regime which was at that time fairly close to us. And it seemed to me that one of the objectives of the Palestinians in staging these assassinations had been precisely to drive a wedge between the United States and the relatively friendly government of President Nimeiri, and I therefore thought that we should do all we could to avoid having a wedge driven between us. And I took that position with Secretary Kissinger, but on the other hand, he pointed out that obviously certain steps had to be taken to show our displeasure, and I fully agreed with that.

The net result was that we froze the relationship at that point. We cut off any further Export-Import Bank assistance, any prospect of any cultural exchanges, all of the normal things that go into the web of relationships of two states that have good relations. We suspended those, and I was instructed not to return to Khartoum until further notice. And I did, in fact, not return until mid-November of that year so I was away I guess it must have been four months.

When I got back I then began a campaign slowly, with the Department, to try to get our relations back to normal because it seemed to me that we had certain interests which were important in the Sudan, and that we were to some extent cutting off our nose to spite our face by having ostensibly normal relations, an Ambassador accredited, present and the Embassy functioning, but, at the same time, having all sorts of special niggling bars on the type of exchanges and the type of assistance, and so forth, that could be worked on. And I was concerned that we might be getting into a situation similar to the one I had found in Egypt when I took over the Egyptian desk where we had all these little niggling things set up that I told you about. It didn't seem to me that that was very useful. That is, either you lower the boom, you pull your Ambassador out, you close your Embassy and you say we're going to have nothing to do with you, I mean, you know forget it. Or you make the best of a bad job and you try and work with what you've got and build a positive relationship.

Well, over time I think I was able to achieve that and one of my proudest achievements is by the time I left the Sudan was that our relations were again very good. We had arranged to have President Ford receive Nimeiri when he made a private visit to the United States. I'd arranged some special functions in Washington while he was there, took him to the Marine barracks to see the Tattoo. He was very pleased with that as a former military man. We introduced a small AID program, it just began to get started but it was something that was coming forward. In their turn they agreed to one or two naval visits that we had over in Port Sudan. We hadn't had any for a long time. In particular, and this is something that I should mention, President Nimeiri and his immediate staff were personally exceedingly helpful to me in my efforts to get the release of ten American hostages who were held over a period of months and even years by the Eritrean Liberation Front in Eritrea. I don't know if this is generally known, but it's not secret. The Eritreans grabbed a number of Americans, presumably to put pressure on the United States Government to end its relationship with the government in Addis Ababa. And, of course, we were reluctant to do that. At the same time this was after the change of government in Addis Ababa and we had very little influence there, at least in my judgement, and therefore the only possibility of getting these people out was to get the Sudanese involved because the Eritreans derive most of their support through the Sudan. I don't believe this necessarily came directly from the Sudanese government, but the Sudanese government either was unable or unwilling to block the support and their supply lines came across the Sudan. So that, to put it very crudely, the Eritreans had a very basic reason to keep the Sudanese government sweet. And I made a very strong pitch to President Nimeiri about the desirability of his playing a role in the release of these American hostages. He obviously agreed and over a period-I forget-it was a long time because these people were captured at various times and held for various periods, but over a period of about a year, I guess, we secured the released of all ten in groups of two or three. And they were all released by the efforts of the Sudanese government.

Q: Who were these people? Were they AID personnel, Peace Corps, or what?

BREWER: My recollection is that almost all of them were private citizens working for American contractors in Asmara and the area around, but one or two of them, I think, were working for oil companies that were prospecting. But I'm not now sure about all of them. I don't believe any were American officials. But anyway, this also showed that the Sudanese were able and willing to play a useful role. And one reason that I felt we could collaborate with Nimeiri was that Nimeiri had been the architect of the Southern settlement.

There had been a civil war in Sudan for a dozen years I think almost. And Nimeiri had been the one to end it on the basis of a compromise settlement which permitted considerable autonomy to the South, and there was a Southern regional government, and they had a southern cabinet, and so forth. And in theory this looked like an acceptable way to resolve this long-standing bitterness between the Arab north and the African south. And as long as I was there this worked, and Nimeiri was the glue that held the country together because he was the only Northerner that the Southerners had much use for because the Southerners realized that he had been responsible for this compromise settlement. Now after I left, of course, the whole thing came apart and now we have another civil war apparently going on out there. But during this time the situation improved very much.

I think there's something else I should say about that period in the Sudan, and that is that while we were developing relatively good relations it seemed clear that the Sudan could not soon develop on an upward track economically. I remember when I first went out there I thought, "this country has absolutely no limit to which it cannot go in economic development." But it turned out that I was mistaken and I remember my staff advising me saying, "Well, look Mr. Ambassador, everybody arrives with these rosy ideas because the Sudanese have 200 million acres of under-used arable land, 90 percent rain fed, and there's no reason they can't turn into the granary of the Third World, etc." And in theory this is true, but given the hugeness of the area of the country, and the disparity of its people, and the inadequacy of its basic infrastructure, this was simply not likely to occur anytime soon, and, of course has not in fact, occurred. And there were just not the resources available. Certainly not in the Sudan but not outside the Sudan either to come in and build the roads and finance the port development and various other things. Had this occurred, it would have then made investment in agriculture and other schemes really worthwhile. So I think the Sudan still has tremendous potential, but it is going to take an awful long time, and an awful lot of money, and an awful lot of effort before the country can develop.

One last item of interest about the Sudan has to do with the coup attempt in July, 1976. This was an effort by the Ansar sect, the conservative western Sudanese, many of whom were in exile in Libya, to creep back into Khartoum and capture Nimeiri, and presumably kill him, and take over the government with the support of the Libyan regime of Colonel Qadhafi. And how it came about was that Nimeiri was returning from his private visit to the United States, that I mentioned. He had stopped off in London, and I had returned directly so I was back in Khartoum to greet him on his return and he was arriving-let us say at 6:00 in the morning. About 11:00 p.m. the night before I was called by the Foreign Office to say that Nimeiri would actually be arriving at 5:00. And I've always wondered whether this reflected some knowledge that they'd picked up, or not, and I don't know. But in any case, he came in early and we were unclear whether he was going to go to his home or simply stay at the airfield and then go on because we did know he was leaving later that day to go on to either India or Ceylon for a meeting, I think it was the non-aligned group. So we met him, and I had a little conversation, and he then disappeared into the V.I.P. lounge to give an interview to the Sudanese press. And we waited outside and after five minutes I said to the head of the Foreign Office, "Well now, are we supposed to stay here until the President leaves?" "Oh," he said to me, "He's already left." Well, I was sort of astonished because he must have gone out the back way. And I then returned to my car and on the way back to the car I heard what sounded like celebratory shots, or perhaps fireworks, coming from the direction of Khartoum itself. And I thought, well the Nimeiri partisans are going all out to welcome their leader back after his visit. And when I got to the car my driver said, "I think we're having a coup d'etat." And I said, "Well, let's drive by the General Staff Headquarters (which was near my residence), and this will give us an idea." And he said, "all right." So we drove by there, and things seemed pretty quiet, but as we drew abreast of the General Headquarters...

-Tape 2, Side B.

BREWER: As I was saying, when we drew abreast of the General Headquarters there was this fusillade of shots, and I said to the driver, "You're quite right, there is a coup d'etat. Let's go back to the residence as quickly as we can." And this inaugurated three days of street fighting in Khartoum which reminded me of nothing so much as World War II. Files of troops crept down by the walls of buildings, and opened fire at buildings across the street and this kind of thing. We kept the Embassy open and some spent the nights there because they didn't want to risk going back and forth to their homes, but I preferred to sleep in my bed so I did go back and forth using back roads and trying to avoid anything that might draw fire. We did have a couple of shots but fortunately no damage. The final day of the coup as it was winding down, one of the dissidents-and there turned out to be about a thousand of these people who had infiltrated into Omdurman from Libya across the desert with their weapons, and they had captured the radio station, and captured some of the other facilities and virtually captured the airfield which was only about a block from where my residence was-fortunately the Sudanese reacted very swiftly and Nimeiri went into hiding so they were unable to find him. There was a rumor later around Khartoum that he left the airfield in the American Ambassador's car. That was not the case, as I say, he slipped out the door but I think he must have had some advance word that something unfortunate was brewing. So he got out of the way and at the end of it one of the last of the dissidents got on the roof of our building because we were next to a hotel and he was able to come across the roofs, and he fired a shot at the government troops from the roof of the Embassy. We had the top two floors of a downtown office building, and I always thought that he did this on purpose to draw fire on the Embassy. And whether he did it on purpose or not, that's exactly what happened and the first thing I knew I saw this line of troops drawn up across the street and leveling their guns at my window and I got out of the way just in time, and this fusillade of shots crashed out and broke most of the windows and the glass flew all over the place. And they fired again a couple of times and I don't think that they realized what they were firing at. I think they thought they were trying to get this character who'd just fired a shot from the roof. Fortunately we had no casualties, although there was a good amount of broken glass, and the government forces proceeded to take over.

Our support for Nimeiri continued unabated during this time and one of the ways it was shown was legitimate, but also amusing. The Sudanese government had the very nice custom of permitting a Chief of Mission to record a message on radio and television to the Sudanese people which would be broadcast on that country's national day. And they'd asked me if I wished to do that, and I had said, yes. So I had gone over to the studio in Omdurman in June and recorded a message to the Sudanese people which was to be played on July 4. Well, the Sudanese did not recapture the radio and television station until about noon on July 4th, and the first message to come across it about 3:00-and, of course, everybody was home because we had a curfew imposed, nobody was permitted to move in town, and so on, and most diplomats were simply sitting by their radios and TVs trying to figure out what was going on-the first message was from Nimeiri himself, saying that he was all right and everything was under control, and the situation had returned to normal which wasn't quite true but it was getting there. But the next message that appeared was my Fourth of July message, and my colleagues all greeted me afterwards with due respect because they said it must have taken great courage to go over there so soon after the radio station had been relieved to deliver this message. And I couldn't resist, I sort of said, "Well, you know, it's all in the line of duty." But obviously the Sudanese government broadcast that message on purpose in order to give the impression, which they did, that the United States Government strongly supported the Nimeiri regime, as in fact we had during this failed coup and we completely opposed any attempt by Qadhafi to interfere in the internal affairs of a neighboring country, which is what he had tried to do. Fortunately he had failed.

So, I think as I said, by the time I left the Sudan that the combination of our efforts and Sudanese efforts, had put our relationship-our bilateral relationship-on a very good basis and we were starting on a phase of very close and mutually beneficial collaboration. And I felt very good about that when I left for home in 1977.

Q: Very good. A question comes to mind. Shortly thereafter you retired from the Foreign Service. Was there any chance of your being offered another Chief of Mission post, or would you have accepted one, or had you made up your mind to retire?

BREWER: Well, I hadn't made up my mind to retire, but I had already had two Chief of Mission assignments, and I consider myself very fortunate to have had them. So I did not really expect another one immediately. It might have been that I might have had one, I was considered for another assignment but that didn't work out. But for a variety of reasons, I began to think that maybe I'd had enough. My tour had been very hard on my wife and family, and so on. If the Service had offered me a very attractive assignment, I probably would have taken it, but in the circumstances I figured it was time for me to retire, and I was happy to find other employment which I found very interesting.

Q: That certainly is interesting and you've certainly had a very rewarding and interesting career. Before we close, I would like to ask you a couple of general questions, which I think are interesting. It has often been said that members of the Foreign Service, particularly those who served in the Near East, tend to be biased towards the Arab world as far as the Arab-Israeli problem is concerned. Do you think there is any truth in that charge. You've certainly spent years in the Arab world.

BREWER: Yes, I did, and I think that's one of the vilest canards that has been foisted on the American public in a long time. The fact of the matter is that many of us Arabist have reason to mistrust the Arabs more than other Americans because we have served among them. Some of us have been mistreated by them. As you may recall, I left Syria under a cloud because I was accused of having had a hand in the murder of the Syrian Deputy Chief of Staff. This was, of course, nonsense but nevertheless this was the attitude of some Syrians. So there is no particular reason for American officers to develop a very friendly relationship with Arabs. Some of them have, of course, but this shorthand which goes around Washington, and around the country, that if you served in an Arab country, and if you speak Arabic, and if you put forward a view which is different from the view that friends of Israel would suggest, that this must be the Arab view rather than an American view, I mean this is absolute nonsense. The fact of the matter is that most of my friends had their difficulties in the Arab world at various times, usually as a result of American policy toward Israel. And our proposals, and what we advocated as our policy, was put forward perhaps erroneously, perhaps we were wrong but out of a firm belief, which I continue to hold, that this is in the interest of the Government of the United States. It may also be of assistance, in certain cases, to some Arab countries but that is incidental. What is important is what are the United States' interests in that part of the world.

Q: Well said. I couldn't agree more. During our interview you several times mentioned the importance of communications. Would you like to elaborate on that theme a bit?

BREWER: Well I would because I think, particularly in this age, communication seems to be downgraded. We all of us get these printout letters which appear to have been hit by the charwoman in the middle of the night and there is no indication that human eye has ever seen any of this stuff. It is important to bear in mind what can be done with communications, and the Foreign Service, during my period of years with it, was above anything else an organ of communication. You had to be able to communicate in writing, both from the field to Washington, and in Washington to the Secretary and the President, and if you couldn't get your ideas on paper concisely and clearly, and speedily, you were not going to be around very long. And in addition to being concise and clear and fast, one also learned that communication can be turned to one's advantage. For example-there are many examples-but people don't realize that how one phrases something is extremely important. But if an Ambassador sends a message saying, "I would like to be instructed to do so and so, please advise." He is then stopped from any action on that issue until he gets a reply to his message. Whereas, if he sends a message saying, "I am planning to see the Foreign Minister the day after tomorrow, and will make to him the following points-1, 2, 3, 4, 5-unless the Department objects," you have then in effect written your own instructions, and if you have not had a reply-you allow time, of course, for there to be a reply-if you've had no reply, you've had your instructions and you go ahead. And, of course, what you do is you will get a reply. You usually, in my experience, get a very short reply saying, "Department approves line you propose taking." Because the man in Washington, who is very busy and very harried, has just had some of his work done for him by having you write your own instructions. But you haven't done it in a way which then leaves the ball in Washington's court. Washington has got to respond, and got to respond very promptly because you have said you were going to take this line in 48 hours, or whatever it is, with the Foreign Minister.

So this does not just apply in Foreign Service, but in a lot of lines of work. How you cast your requests has a good deal to do with what you are permitted to do thereafter. And I think that message is one that needs repeating in this day and age when the art of communications appears to be eroding rapidly.

Q: I agree, and I think this is something that the Foreign Service Institute could well pay more attention to.

BREWER: Well perhaps if they are not-I'm not familiar with the curriculum of the Institute right now, but certainly if they are not doing so, they should, because it is very important. And incidentally, it was something the Institute did not pay much attention to when I went through the Institute, but I did learn it from some of my Chiefs, particularly Ambassador Hare and Ambassador Moose, both of whom were brought up in the old school of drafting, knew the value of words and would spend a great deal of time working with junior officers to train them to draft correctly and concisely.

Q: Very good. One final question, Bill, before we close our interview. Given your experience and your many, many years in the Foreign Service, would you recommend a Foreign Service career to your children or anybody else's?

BREWER: Well, I would not proselytize, on the other hand if someone came to me and said, "I'm really dying to get into the Foreign Service, what do you think of the idea?" I don't think I would seek to discourage that individual because certainly the Service and the country needs good people. I do think, however, that the Service is not as attractive a place in which to serve as it was when you and I were officers. Because I think essentially what has happened over the years, as a result both of actions by Department administrators, and by the Congress, and by various Administrations, what you have had have been measures which smack of pulling up the flower to see whether it's blooming. And modifications have been made in the way the Department has administered, you know, the number of classes, the time in class, what you can expect after such- and-such assignment, and all of this, and to me this is ridiculous. You ought to leave that sort of thing alone and you ought to take the attitude with critics, if there are any of the Foreign Service, that the Foreign Service is doing a pretty good job and let us get on with it, rather than to introduce some new modification, at considerable trouble and expense, which then gets everybody confused as to how things ought to be done in the future.

I'm much more a partisan of the system which, I believe is the basis of the British Foreign Service, namely: make the entrance examinations as tough as you want. People who are successful in passing those exams, young people of both sexes, are going to be so highly qualified that thereafter you can assume that 80 percent of them, say, ought to go to the top of the Service, and ought to wind up as Chiefs of Mission. And this business of periodic attrition, you know, selection out, keeping the pyramid very precise, introducing lateral entrants for particular roles, all of this is to my mind foreign to the development of a really first rate Foreign Service. And I was very sorry to see these steps introduced, and if I could wave a wand and do anything about it, I would like to see them rescinded.

Q: Fine. Well, unless you have any other comments, I think this closes our interview. I want to thank you very much for, to me at least, what has been an extremely interesting experience.

BREWER: Thank you, Malcolm, for taking the trouble to interview me. It has been a pleasure to go over some of these things and I appreciate your input.

Q: Good.

End of interview